

BOOK REVIEWS

Alan Crosby, *A history of Woking*, Phillimore, 2003, £20. Hardback, xiv + 210pp, many illustrations. ISBN 1 86077 262 5

Dr Crosby was born in Woking in 1955 and attended Woking County Grammar School before reading geography at Oxford. Although for some time past he has been resident in Lancashire, he retains his connections with Woking through relatives still living in the town. In 1982, he published his first book – *A history of Woking*, no less – and since then has written numerous books and articles. As a result of his writing and by being the current editor of *The Local Historian*, he is far better-known nationally than are most local historians. He is a former chairman of the Association of Local History Tutors and has twice won the Library Association's Alan Ball Award for local history publications.

The volume is a meaty read, albeit with a lightness of style that makes the meal readily digestible. It is probably inevitable that more than two-thirds of Dr Crosby's text is devoted to the last 170 years, only 20 pages to the previous 130 and 40 pages to the earlier millennia. As a result, even though the material is excellently ordered, some interesting aspects of the earlier centuries get scant or even simplistic attention, presumably reflecting gaps in the author's interests. The earlier history is not subjected to the same degree of critical analysis as the later and has a slightly peremptory air: where standard material is not being recycled, other historians' tentative conclusions and, indeed, hypotheses are sometimes paraded as fact. With the 18th century, however, the author begins to apply his many skills with more rigour.

But it is with the coming of the railways that Dr Crosby really imposes his authority and his narrative becomes fully absorbing. 'New' Woking is sometimes thought of as a railway town but, in truth, it was something quite rare – a property development based on a cemetery. The cemetery, of course, depended on the railway. The complicated story is superbly told here and full weight is given to the far from creditable background in land speculation (the parallels with events in the 20th century do not need to be spelled out). Dr Crosby's clear and coherent story continues through the recent past to the present day with social aspects taking pride of place over topographical.

One or two descriptions survive from the 1982 volume that no longer apply (eg the 'fine red-brick barn' on the Woking Palace site) but the volume under review is more than a revision of the earlier book. It is particularly notable for being far more substantial than is usual for the Phillimore stable and the text is not swamped by illustrations. The book is excellently designed and the illustrations used are nicely chosen and interesting in themselves. The maps are commendably clear and, in the main, accurate and helpful. One exception, however, is the map of pre-Conquest *parochiae* on p7, which has no key but appears to show two churches at Chertsey and marks Newark Priory, not founded until the mid-1190s. The accompanying text muddles minsters and monasteries.

The volume contains a lengthy bibliography and useful information about primary sources. However, the lack of differentiation in the bibliography and the total lack of annotation in the text introduce difficulties for readers who might wish to check or pursue some of the author's statements or quotations. In some cases tested, the links with the source would seem to be impenetrable. This is in line with Phillimore's general editorial policy, but is no less regrettable for that and Dr Crosby should have been in a better position than most to contest Phillimore's obscurantism.

Some minor errors have survived from the 'first edition' and the reasonably important late 19th century Railway Orphanage (demolished around 1990) seems to have escaped mention. The index is, as in many Phillimore publications, somewhat attenuated. Dr Gottlieb Wilhelm Leitner appears in the index as Wilhelm Gottlieb Leitner.

David Taylor, *Cobham: a history*, Phillimore, 2003, £16.99. Hardback, 160pp, 175 illustrations. ISBN 1 86077 247 1

David Taylor could also be known as ‘Mr Cobham’. This is his ninth book on Cobham, and he has also written many newspaper articles on the village (or town as some would have it!). These covered particular aspects of Cobham with the exception of his first, *The book of Cobham*, published way back in 1982. Since then, more discoveries have been made and no doubt more sources traced, and this new book is a thorough overview of Cobham’s history.

The book is basically chronological with each of the chapters divided into themes, covering the period from the Mesolithic to the 20th century. I know Cobham to drive through, and have visited Painshill Park on many occasions, but reading through this book, I discovered much of which I was unaware. I did not know that Cobham is composed of two separate centres – Street Cobham and Church Cobham – which have only recently been joined together by housing. I learnt that the manor was owned by Chertsey Abbey, which seems to have been a great help with finding records, and I discovered that, being on the Portsmouth Road, Cobham had more than its fair share of important visitors. Samuel Pepys visited in 1668 (and got lost!). Admiral Nelson visited, Jane Austen did, and others came to choose Cobham for their country retreats.

It seems that every source has been exploited to extract Cobham’s history, especially in the early period, where sources such as the Surrey Eyre are described. Where technical terms are used, these too are clearly explained. This is all very useful for people studying their own areas. Most of us have heard of the Hearth Tax, the Free and Voluntary Present of 1660 and other such useful lists of persons, but I had not heard of a 1699 tax collection ‘on his Majesty’s Brief for the Vandors & French Refugees’.

As well as useful information such as this, David Taylor’s book is full of interesting anecdotes, which make the book a joy to read. In 1331, Henry de Doune had to pay a tax to Chertsey Abbey of 15s 9d, an ox, a horse, and nine gallons of honey! Bees feature again in 1599, when John Abbot leaves a swarm of bees in his will. Even a subject which would not be my favourite reading, 18th century agricultural reforms, is covered in an informative and interesting way.

The book is also thoroughly illustrated with over 160 pictures. No fewer than eighteen of these are early 19th century watercolours by John Hassell, who seems to give Cobham very good coverage. These are credited as to whether they come from the British Library, the Surrey History Service or elsewhere, but many of the other pictures are not sourced which is a slight niggle. Also, there are occasional quotes in the text, which are not sourced, though most are. This is probably more to do with Phillimore’s style of production (ie no footnotes), than a fault of the author. My only other regret is the abridged 20th century chapter at the end. This could, of course, be a book in itself, so perhaps the author is right to summarize it and admit it, rather than to try and treat it with the same degree of thoroughness as all the preceding centuries, which would not have been possible in the space allowed.

All in all, I can thoroughly recommend this book. It will encourage me to look at Cobham with new eyes, and to go on the Conservation Area and Digger walks, which have been laid out to help us all enjoy this corner of Surrey.

TIM EVERSON

Ian N Gregory, *A place in history: a guide to using GIS in historical research*, History Data Service, published by Oxbow Books, Oxford, 2003, price £12. Softback, vii + 80pp, 21 figures. ISBN 1 84217 036 8

The Arts and Humanities Data Service (AHDS) produces guides to good practice in the use of computers for research. This one forms a valuable contribution to those in the Archaeology and History Data Services. Although only a small paperback, it gives a comprehensive

introduction to the use and application of GIS (Geographical Information Systems) in historical research. GIS is not just a means of presenting maps but also for holding complex attribute information about those maps in the form of databases, which can in turn be interrogated to produce new themes or layers derived from the original data. There are several software packages available: the most commonly used being MapInfo or ArcView which have their own databases, or which can be used with others such as Access or Excel. Ian Gregory at the very beginning of the book highlights the drawbacks that GIS can have especially if the data input (or capture) has not been rigorous, as well as the steep learning curve many may have when coming to GIS for the first time. But this book clearly explains the jargon and technical terms with an excellent glossary. He works through the various aspects and uses of GIS with some good case studies taken from historical research supported with a comprehensive bibliography. The book covers the main aspects of GIS, namely acquiring data, querying data, the aspect of time-depth, visualizing the data ie producing maps, diagrams, charts etc and concludes with the role of the History Data Service in setting the standards in data collection and storage.

GIS can present information in the form of a point, a line or an area known as a polygon. Information about that spatial data, known as attribute data, is attached via a database. It is this attribute data which can be interrogated and queried. The real value of GIS comes when several different data sets about a particular geographical area can be overlaid and/or integrated. This is of special value to historians who may have to look at research involving attributes, time and space which can all be treated equally. Further statistical analysis of the data can be undertaken using specialized software packages. Producing visual displays from GIS data can also have hidden problems and Ian Gregory explains drawbacks, as well as good practice when deciding on form of layout, use of colours and types of legends.

For students, researchers or anyone interested in history and approaching GIS for the first time or those wishing to refresh their background knowledge, this book is an excellent starting point.

NICOLA R BANNISTER

Wayne D Cocroft, *Chilworth gunpowder works, Surrey*, English Heritage Archaeological Investigation Report Series AI/20/2003, price £15. Softback, viii + 157pp, illustrations, maps, ISSN 1478-7008

The archaeology of the gunpowder industry has received considerable attention since the 1980s. Surveys of gunpowder manufacturing sites have been undertaken by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England and by English Heritage, with which the RCHME has amalgamated, in Devon, Kent, Essex and Cumbria. In 2000 English Heritage published the book *Dangerous energy: the archaeology of gunpowder and military explosives manufacture* by Wayne Cocroft, author of the present report on Chilworth.

It is to Guildford Borough Council's credit that they chose to draw on this fund of experience when they commissioned a survey of the remains of the Chilworth gunpowder mills in 2001. The Borough Council owns a large part of the site and actively supports and interacts with the local Working Group which represents historical, environmental and community interests in its care and management. The area occupied by the gunpowder industry at any time in the mills' 300-year history extends from a point just within the parish of Shalford in the west to Waterloo pond and the grounds of Postford House in the east. Guildford Borough Council owns the central part (from Blacksmith Lane eastwards to Lockner Farm Road) which became a Scheduled Monument in 1982. However, English Heritage extended its survey to include the area to the east that was scheduled in 1999 and comprises the site of the late 19th century smokeless powder works, which has rare surviving structures of an early cordite factory, and that of the Admiralty Cordite Factory built in the First World War.

The principal chapters of the volume are entitled Historical Background, Site Description, and Phasing and Analysis. The first reviews the extensive historical research which had already been carried out and adds new information, particularly on more recent periods, including the decades since the closure of the works in 1920. The Site Description begins with the watercourses that form the basic framework and then describes individual features in each of the four main units: the Lower Works, Middle Works, 1890s Smokeless Powder Factory and First World War Admiralty Cordite Factory. This section is illustrated with photographs, many of them coloured, measured drawings of structures on fold-out pages and a set of fold-out site plans on a scale of 1:1000. The analytical section describes the topographical and technological development of the factory chronologically, under ten period headings. The discussion is elucidated by appendices giving flow diagrams of the processes of manufacture, one for gunpowder (black powder made from saltpetre, charcoal and sulphur) and one for the processes of cordite manufacture which were carried out at Chilworth, ie excluding the initial preparation of cordite paste from nitrocellulose and nitroglycerine, which was done elsewhere. Transport is discussed at the end of the chronological account and covers the use of waterways, roads and the works tramway but does not raise the question of how far rail transport was used other than for bringing in coal for steam power.

Two topics are singled out for special Notes. The first, on the millstones, discusses the history and use of edge runners at Chilworth and contains a table giving details of the 29 stones found on the site. The problem of the source of the stones, which has puzzled geologists and for which no documentary evidence has so far been found, is not however touched upon. The second Note gives an account of the renowned Burbach iron and steel works which supplied structural steel members to the Anglo-German Chilworth Gunpowder Company established in 1885.

The report does not seek to set an agenda for further investigation – that is outside its terms of reference – but several unsolved questions receive due mention. The historical section notes the unexplained anomaly that the powder mills were contracting at the time when war was breaking out in 1701. In the context of the landscape, the problem of the purpose of the causeway in the lane from Lockner Farm to Chilworth Manor is noted and the interesting suggestion is made that a dam and pond here may have been related to water management for agriculture (water meadows being one of many significant landscape features of the Tillingbourne valley). Buried features were outside the scope of the survey but it is observed that there is archaeological potential in the former materials preparation and service area west of Blacksmith Lane and that structures representing earlier technology may lie under remains of 18th century mills in the Middle Works.

Given the scale of the commitment and resources employed in this project, it may seem ungrateful to point out that the extreme eastern and western ends of the site, where some of the 17th century pestle-and-mortar type mills were located, are outside the designated area of the survey and are not analysed in detail. The author does however consider the industrial complex as a whole and notes that much has been destroyed by redevelopment, both west of Blacksmith Lane and on the site of Bottings' mill at Postford. The area redeveloped, and monitored, in the 1990s at Postford did not extend as far as the most easterly mill site on the dam of Postford Pond, as shown on a 1728 survey. Similarly at the western end, where the gunpowder mills were succeeded by paper mills in the 18th and 19th centuries, later industrial development did not extend over the parish boundary into Shalford, where the mill recorded in 1677 as 'Shifford' mill must surely have stood. So questions remain for future investigation.

The principal aim of the report is to provide data on which to base policy for the site. It is encouraging that moves are already being made to assess the condition of the recorded remains in preparation for drawing up a management plan. The report also provides a clearly and attractively presented account of the mills for those who simply wish to know more about them and will be of interest to anyone involved in recording industrial sites. The use of some of the buildings as housing in the inter-war and early post-war period occurred within living memory. The report refers to this inhabited complex as 'Tin Town' but according to some

local residents this name was reserved for the post-war 'prefabs' on the Hornhatch estate. A worthwhile project for the Chilworth Local History Society, newly established in 2004, might be to study this period and to clarify such matters, fill in the details and ensure that local memories are recorded.

Copies of the report may be ordered from English Heritage, Brooklands, 24 Brooklands Avenue, Cambridge CB2 2BU. It is exceptionally good value at £15 and a CD-ROM containing the related professional papers is available at £5. Prices include post and packing and cheques should be made payable to English Heritage.

GLENYS CROCKER

Robin Taylor-Wilson, *Excavations at Hunt's House, Guy's Hospital, London Borough of Southwark*, Pre-Construct Archaeology Monograph 1, 2002, £7. Softback, A4, xi + 68pp, 41 illustrations. ISBN 0 9542938 0 0

This monograph, by the fieldwork director, gives a straightforward description of what was found in the 1997–8 excavation of a site occupied until recently by the eponymous Victorian building. This was at the eastern edge of the Southwark island and extended over (what is now called) Guy's Channel, subsequently hidden by post-medieval dumping. The narrative is enlivened by the odd hint of difficulty (concrete foundations) and excitement (finding rare post-medieval pottery on a site being dug for its Roman potential). It incorporates evidence from, and throws light on, previous excavations in the vicinity, starting with Kathleen Kenyon in the late 1940s. Figure 5 shows those dug by professional units, but not the earlier sites.

Twelve periods of activity were recorded, from prehistoric times to the early 19th century – half of them Roman; these are well summarized in figure 36.

Prehistoric use of the site, from about 8000 years ago, involved flint working for which there is a specialist lithics report. Later ard marks show cultivation, tying in with other evidence from the Southwark island.

The Romans found marshland with rivulets and channels providing access for boats. A jetty was built early on, but the site flooded, then emerged briefly in the late 2nd century, before being inundated until the early 3rd century. It then remained dry until the end of the Roman period. Guy's Channel is a general focus of interest: Marsden found the Roman boat nearby. Most finds had been brought with material from higher ground on the island to consolidate the channel edge, with British-made pottery featuring in the assemblage. A 3rd century wood-lined enclosure was interpreted as an amphorae storage tank, 2.6 x 6+m, with many amphorae sherds in it; other similar structures have been found in the area. Towards the end of the Roman period metalworking was carried out nearby. Specialist reports on the Roman material cover pottery, small finds, mammalian and plant remains.

The Thames then rose again, flooding the area until the 14th century when ditches were then dug, possibly to allow boat access across the site. The surface level was raised by dumping – up to the 18th century and eventually to above the Hunt's House foundation level – though some later features dug into it have survived. Two such features were brick-lined cesspits with finds containing an unusual range of 18th century pottery: much Border ware, including a rare yellow-glazed dish; Delftware, including a Chinese-style tea bowl and a George III plate; London Stoneware wine bottles; clay tobacco pipes; there was also Continental pottery and Chinese porcelain. Details of the finds are contained in a specialist report on the pottery.

Calling it PCA Monograph 1 implies a series to come – encourage future issues by buying this one. It has been produced to a good archaeological standard and, with its bibliography covering the last 50 years, nicely integrates the site into the archaeology of north Southwark.

RICHARD BUCHANAN

